

From: mchaney@carliseschool.org@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 1:56pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern:

I am the system administrator for Carlisle School, a small independent school in Southwest Virginia. We have over 200 computers in active use with a variety of operating systems, most of which are versions of Microsoft Windows. I am deeply concerned about the current state of the Microsoft anti-trust settlement. We rely heavily on donations of money and hardware in order to continue to provide our students with the computing background they need for college and later in life. The biggest obstacle to my job is the lack of viable alternatives for expensive Microsoft products. The current settlement will not do anything to address the major problems that we face with our computers: Microsoft Office.

The school adopted Microsoft Office 2000 as its office suite shortly before I was hired. We would very much like to be able to look at alternatives such as Wordperfect Office from Corel, which offer better features and/or pricing that is more friendly to small academic institutions. Unfortunately Microsoft's closed document formats make this all but impossible. If a student saves a document in Word at home they won't be able to print it out and turn it in here at school unless we also have Word. I am unable to recommend alternative products to students asking my advice on computer purchases because they need to be compatible with what we have here at school. If Microsoft's office document formats were made public, then I would be free to shop around and find the solution that best served the students' needs. I could tell students about a variety of office suites and help them make informed decisions. As it stands, I am terrified of the day when Microsoft changes its format to something Office 2000 cannot read, forcing us to deal with expensive and restrictive licenses on software that will likely not run on 65% of our machines. The current settlement does nothing to address the issue of opening up MS document formats, and therefore does little to help the students of Carlisle School.

Marshall Chaney
System Administrator/Videographer
Carlisle School
300 Carlisle Road
P. O. Box 5388
Martinsville, Virginia 24115

CC: gmchaney@alumni.duke.edu@inetgw